

Vanity Ballroom Building

Address: 1024 Newport

Local

State

State Marker

National v 11/12/82



Vanity Ballroom, 2002



Historic Overview:

The Vanity Ballroom was built in 1929 and designed by Charles N. Agree. Built in the Art Deco style with an Aztec theme it is one of the last remaining former ballrooms in Detroit that accommodated the big bands from the 1930's to 1950's. The two-story building with five retail stores on the first floor and a ballroom on the second is located at the corner of Newport and E. Jefferson Avenue. The building has a steel and reinforced concrete structure with orange and dark brick veneer with stone and tile ornamentation. Three of the stores were also designed by Agree displaying the Art Deco Aztec theme on the interior with elements such as wood and marble trim and terrazzo floors. The first floor storefronts have been greatly altered but the second floor has remained virtually untouched.

The ballroom features a 5,000 square-foot maple dance floor, stage/bandstand, and promenade on three sides. The dance floor was built on springs designed to sink with the weight of the people who danced on it. The ballroom held approximately 1,000 couples. The Vanity entertained the masses 5 nights a week from September through June hosting such acts as Red Nichols and his Five Pennies, the Russ Morgan and Art Mooney bands in the 1930's, Benny Goodman and Duke Ellington in the 1940's and Woody Herman, Pee Wee Hunt and Jimmy and Tommy Dorsey in the 1950's.¹

The ballroom closed in 1958 when business tapered off but was re-opened in 1964 one night a week. Currently the building is privately owned, vacant and in disrepair.

¹ Information obtained from the National Register of Historic Sites Nomination Form for the Vanity Ballroom Building.

